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Anderson, Christopher

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## The Composition of the German Bundestag since 1949: Long-Term Trends and Institutional Effects

*Christopher Anderson\**

**Abstract:** This paper traces some of the main long-term trends with regard to the socio-demographic and political composition of the German Bundestag between 1949 and 1990. Moreover, the paper seeks to establish to what extent the logic of Germany's electoral system influences the recruitment of Bundestag members with particular characteristics.

The study of political, social, and economic elites has a long and distinguished tradition in the social sciences. Classic examples include, but are not limited to, the works of Mosca, Pareto, Michels, Mills, Lasswell, and Dahrendorf, to name just a select few. Sociologists in general, and political sociologists in particular, have long been interested in the distribution of power, the recruitment of political elites, their social and political interrelationships, and the consequences of elite behavior for the functioning of democratic polities (Weege 1992). Thus it should not come as a surprise that the study of elites has been particularly extensive in Germany, where the path toward democracy has been somewhat »uneven« (Hoffmann-Lange 1989, 1991). In particular, there have been a number of empirical historical-sociological studies on German political elites, covering much of the period between the late 19th century and modern-day (West) Germany. (1) To name them all would take up the remaining space of this paper. Yet, until recently, there have been only a modest number of empirical studies of one of the most visible groups of political elites in the Federal Republic of Germany: The members of the Bundestag, the German national legislature. Those studies that are available on the Bundestag generally focus on objective socio-demographic characteristics of its members at particular points in time (cf. Kaack 1967, 1969, 1971, 1988; Müller 1983), or they seek to investigate the functioning of the legislature as a parliamentary body, on occasion with the help of surveys of, or about, Bundestag deputies (cf. Löwenberg 1967; Löwenberg and Patterson 1979; Herzog et al. 1990). However, there have been few studies which analyze the composition of the Bundestag over time and few which explore the consequences of Germany's electoral system

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\* Address all communications to: Christopher Anderson, Department of Political Science, Campus Box 1063, Washington University, One Brookings Drive, St. Louis, MO 63130-4899, USA.

for the distribution of Bundestag members with particular social or political characteristics. In fact, comparative political scientists have only recently rediscovered the study of the composition of legislatures (Lijphart 1984, 1990; Rule 1987).

This is all the more surprising as the German Bundestag provides an intriguing setting for the study of political elites given that it allows for the examination of questions that are of interest to historians, political sociologists, and political scientists: First, the study of the social and political characteristics of the Bundestag as a representative body allows us to address the issue of democratic development in Germany after World War II and the development of German society in general (cf. Dahrendorf 1967), as well as the consequences of the unification of the two German states in 1990 for German political life (cf. Anderson et al. 1993). Secondly, Germany is a particularly interesting case for political scientists interested in the consequences of political institutions because of the unique nature of Germany's electoral system (Kaase 1984). In line with these research traditions, this paper seeks to achieve two things: First it attempts to portray some of the major trends and changes in the Bundestag's composition for the period between the founding of the Federal Republic in 1949 and the unification of Germany in 1990, using key socio-demographic and political variables such as age, education, seniority, and gender. Second, it seeks to demonstrate some of the — long suspected — consequences inherent in the logic of the German electoral system (cf. Duverger 1954; Kitzinger 1957).

### **The Composition of the Bundestag, 1949-1990**

How, and to what extent, has the composition of the Bundestag changed over time and to what extent do these changes reflect changes in (West) German society as a whole? In order to answer this question, we will examine the aggregate dynamics of the Bundestag's composition with regard to age, seniority, education, and the representation of women.

Age and education are useful macro-indicators for changes that take place in a society as a whole, as well as the changes that take place in a society's representative body, i.e. its national legislature. Unless otherwise specified, this analysis is based on data compiled by the author on the basis of various volumes of Schindler's *Datenhandbuch zur Geschichte des Deutschen Bundestages*, augmented by the most recent editions of Kürschner's *Volkshandbuch Deutscher Bundestag*. The average age of Bundestag deputies has fluctuated between 52.3 years (1961) and 46.6 (1972). The newly elected 1990 Bundestag's mean age of 48.7 years fits in well with those past figures.

It is interesting to note, however, that there was a period of declining mean age in the Bundestag between 1961 and 1972, followed by a distinct increase in

Figure 1.  
Average Age of Bundestag Deputies (in years), 1949-1990

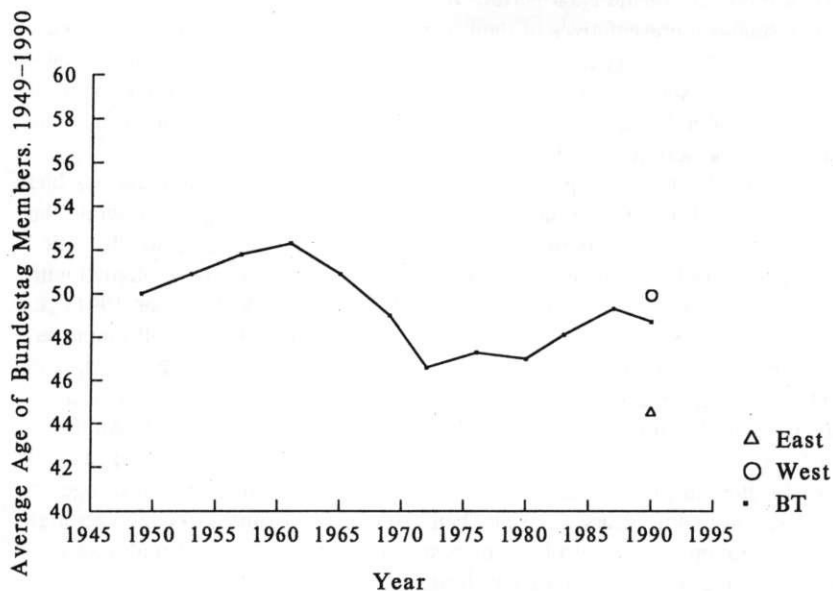
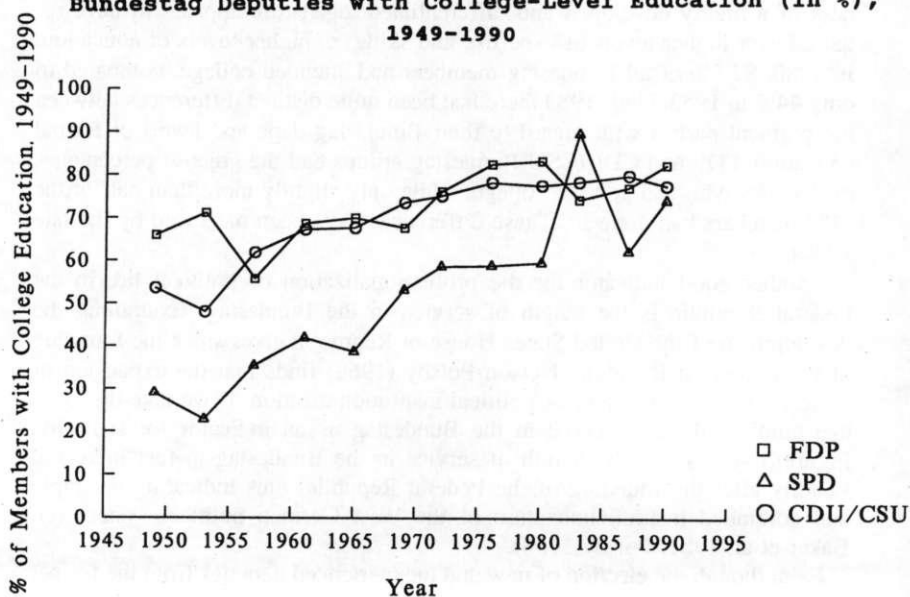


Figure 2.  
Bundestag Deputies with College-Level Education (in %), 1949-1990



the subsequent period, peaking in 1987. This decline was probably to a large extent the result of the Nazi period. If we think about the elites elected to the Bundestag as representatives of their respective political generations, it appears evident that the average age of Bundestag members decreased because of a lack of politically experienced and »respectable« elites available for recruitment in the 1960s after the generation socialized during the Second Empire and the early Weimar period started to retire (Dalton 1993: 219).

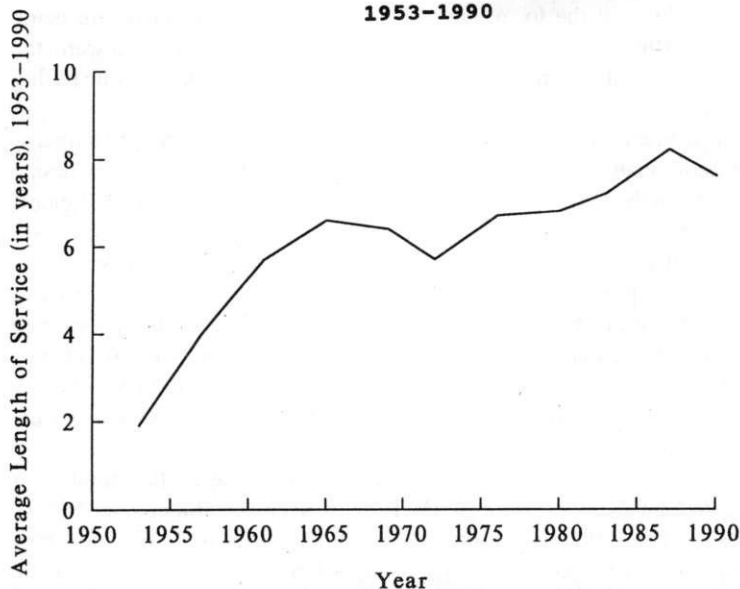
The CDU/CSU as the party of the middle and upper-middle class has had relatively weak ties to the unions and industrial workers in general, while the SPD, as the classical party of the trade union movement, has traditionally relied on support from labor and unions; more recently, it has also been aligned with white collar workers and »technocrats« (Baker et al. 1981; Alber 1991). In contrast to the SPD, the CDU/CSU has a higher proportion of self-employed and university graduates than the SPD (Kaack 1988; Müller 1983), and CDU/CSU deputies are also more likely to have held a job of higher occupational status before their election to the Bundestag (Müller 1983; Anderson 1989). Levels of formal education, which can also be taken as an indicator of social status, displays a pattern that is somewhat different than that of age. In the last forty-some years there has been a trend toward the »Akademisierung« (academization), not only of German society, but also of the Bundestag as a representative body of that society (see Figure 2).

In essence this means that the percentage of deputies with college or university level education has increased dramatically since 1949. The daily business of a highly developed and differentiated legislature appears to have required ever higher levels of expertise and skill, i.e. higher levels of education. In 1980, 82.5% of all Bundestag members had attended college, compared to only 44% in 1953. Until 1983 there had been quite distinct differences between the political parties with regard to their Bundestag deputies' levels of formal education. FDP and CDU/CSU Bundestag groups had the greatest percentages of deputies who had gone to college, while only slightly more than half of the SPD members had done so. These differences have been narrowed by the late 1980s.

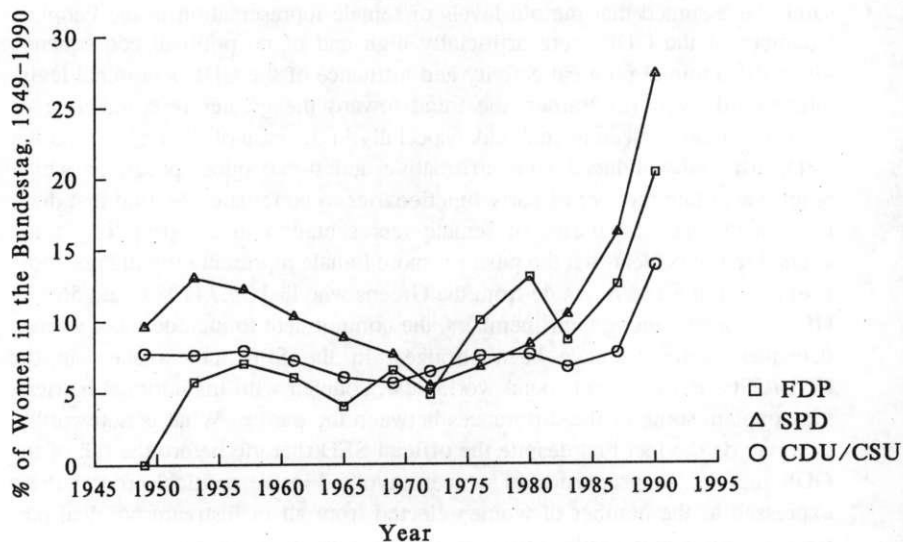
Another good indicator for the professionalization of political life in the Federal Republic is the length of service in the Bundestag. Examining the development of the United States House of Representatives since the founding of the American Republic, Nelson Polsby (1968) finds that the expansion of seniority is a key indicator of political institutionalization. If we take the average number of years served in the Bundestag as an indicator for seniority, Figure 3 shows that the length of service in the Bundestag in fact increased steadily after the founding of the Federal Republic, thus indicating the rapid and continued institutionalization of the West German political system (cf. Baker et al. 1981; Polsby 1968).

Even though the election of new and inexperienced deputies from the former East-Germany in 1990 means that the overall level of seniority has inevitably

**Figure 3.**  
**Average Length of Service in the Bundestag (in years),**  
**1953-1990**



**Figure 4.**  
**Percentage of Women in the Bundestag, 1949-1990**



declined after the last election, seniority has steadied around 7 to 8 years of service in the Bundestag. Given that almost all Bundestag deputies are actively involved in politics at the local, party, Land, or European level before being elected to the Bundestag, this is one more indicator for a trend toward the thorough professionalization of the political elite in the Federal Republic during the last 45 years.

Although women now constitute the majority of eligible voters in Germany, they have traditionally been greatly underrepresented in the German Bundestag (see Figure 4). In the period between 1949 and 1980, the percentage of Bundestag deputies who are women has fluctuated between 8.8% (1953) and 5.8% (1972). With the beginning of the 1980s and the electoral success of the Greens, however, pressure on the big parties (CDU/CSU, SPD) increased to involve a greater number of women in party politics and to eventually nominate more women for election to the Bundestag. Aside from the pressure for change because of ideological reasons, the proposals to include more women at any level of politics were also seen by party strategists as a means to make the parties more attractive for women voters.

Beginning in 1983, there is a marked overall increase in the number of Bundestag members who are women. By 1987, women constituted over 15% of the Bundestag. The 1990 election brought yet another increase in the number of female deputies with more than 1/5 of the Bundestag now being female (20.5%). Even though the reasons for this development are likely to be complex, some preliminary explanations can be given. The increase is almost certainly not a result of the unification since the percentage of women members from the East is almost identical to that of the West (21.6 vs. 20.3%). It can safely be assumed that the old levels of female representation in the People's Chamber of the GDR were artificially high and of no political consequence given the minimal political activity and influence of the GDR's nominal legislature until 1990. (2) Rather, the trend toward the greater representation of women should be seen as real and, especially in the case of the Greens and the SPD, artificially induced with affirmative action-like quota programs which require a certain number of party functionaries to be female. We find that there have been distinct patterns of female representation in the past forty-some years. First, it is clear that the push for more female representation did not show results until the 1980s. Aside from the Greens who had 35.7 (1983) and 56.8 % (1987) women among their members, the commitment to include more women delegates seems to have been strongest in the SPD and weakest in the CDU/CSU. Political and social worldview, coupled with institutional barriers, may explain some of the differences between the parties. What is noteworthy, however, is the fact that despite the official SED rhetoric before the fall of the GDR regime, the proportion of women involved in the political process (here expressed as the number of women elected from all mainstream political parties) is not significantly different in the East than in the West. As the

CDU/CSU, SPD and the FDP have more than doubled the proportion of women serving in the Bundestag, it appears evident, however, that the greater involvement of women in party politics and as representatives in the Bundestag will alter the political landscape considerably.

### **Ossis and Wessis in the new Bundestag**

The unification of the two German states constituted the most radical break in Germany's post-war history. Aside from the revision of institutional structures in the former GDR, it also meant the incorporation of the former East Germany into the Federal Republic's electoral system (Kaase 1993; Anderson 1993). Given the radical changes in East Germany during the course of the unification process, the lack of a democratic experience, the lack of a western-style political infrastructure, and a lack of professional democratic politicians, one might expect significant differences in the social and political composition of the representatives from the East and the West. Some researchers have argued, on the other hand, that the West German party system was transferred to the East during the unification year (Kaase and Gibowski 1990; Lehmbruch 1990). Given that 40 years of communist rule left little room for the formation of partisan attachments as they are usually developed in advanced industrialized nations (Roth 1990), the East German partisan landscape is seen by these scholars as having been invaded by the strategically highly skilled West German party machines. (3) Should such a super-imposition of the western party system extend to the area of candidate recruitment, we would expect to find relatively few differences between the representatives from the East and the West. However, one thing was certain: The new Bundestag was going to consist of a sizable majority of experienced and professional politicians from the West (many of whom had considerable seniority), and a minority of inexperienced, unpolished, freshmen from the East, most of whom had been catapulted into political office during the previous year. As candidate recruitment is largely recruitment by the party (Kaack 1969), how were the political parties to select individuals as candidates in the East? What qualifications and characteristics were to be applied? Keeping in mind that self-selection naturally played a role as well, it is important to remember the problems inherent in recruiting viable candidates for elective office from a society that had just thrown off the burden of an authoritarian regime and where individual involvement with the communist state was widespread. Under these circumstances, what kinds of individuals would one expect to represent the former GDR in the new Bundestag? The following observations and calculations are based on a data set of the 1990 Bundestag compiled by the author with the help of Kurschner's *Volkshandbuch Deutscher Bundestag* for the 12th legislative period. (4)



A politically interesting difference emerges when we compare the average age of deputies elected in the former GDR with those elected in the old Federal Republic. Easterners are younger than Westerners. While the average age of deputies representing the West hovers around 50 for the three major parties, (5) deputies elected from the East are substantially younger (44.5 vs. 49.9 yrs.). This distinction comes with a little twist. In contrast to their western counterparts, among whom the age-differences between males and females are relatively small, the CDU women elected in the East are much younger than their male colleagues (38.0 vs. 46.0 yrs.) and thus more similar in age to those from the Greens/B90 and the PDS (average age 36.0 and 35.3 yrs., respectively). The youngest male deputies elected in East Germany come from the SPD (43.5 yrs.), while the oldest male deputies represent the former Communist party, i.e. the PDS/LL (49.8 yrs.).

With regard to formal levels of education in the 1990 Bundestag as a whole, we find that the Greens/B90 (100%) and the PDS/LL (88.2%) have the greatest proportions of college-educated members in the 1990 Bundestag. The FDP leads the rest of the pack (82.3%), followed by the CDU/CSU (77.5%) and the SPD (74.1%). However, these numbers again tell only half the story. When we compare Easterners and Westerners, a uniform and curious distinction emerges: Ironically, the deputies from the former »Workers and Peasants' State« have higher levels of education, regardless of political party. The difference is most pronounced for the SPD (94.1% [East] vs. 70.73% [West]) and least noticeable for the CDU/CSU. Possible explanations for the SPD's pattern of high educational levels among its members is the non-existence of a labor movement in the East before the unification of the two Germanies, as well as the novelty of the SPD in the East. Since less deputies from the East are organized in unions (Miiller 1992), the SPD group in the Bundestag is thus a curious mix of members from the West, where the ties between the unions and the SPD have a long and institutionalized tradition, and members from the East where the SPD is a new creation led by intellectuals.

However, the other parties also have higher levels of college-educated eastern members. This becomes even more apparent when we look at the proportion of members with doctoral degrees. Almost half of the eastern FDP deputies have a doctorate (47.1%) as compared to a quarter of the FDP's western delegates (25.8%). The respective numbers for the SPD are a quarter in the East (28.4%) and a fifth in the West (19.0%). Only the CDU/CSU has more members with doctorates among the western deputies (30.3%) than among their eastern colleagues (26.6%).

What are the implications of these findings? When the overall trends of age and education are examined, the new Bundestag appears to be a picture of continuity (cf. Figures 1 and 3). However, the aggregated results obscure potentially important and noteworthy consequences. Female politicians, who in the past had to prove their electability — which can be expressed as a function

of age equalling experience — and thus tended to be older than male Bundestag members (Schindler 1984), are now younger across all political parties. This may be due to a change in attitudes when it comes to candidate recruitment within the parties. It is interesting to note in this context that female eastern CDU delegates are younger than any other group within the CDU/CSU (East or West). Whether this means greater diversity within the CDU cannot be predicted, but the example of Angela Merkel (now Minister for Family Affairs) who has been a protege of Chancellor Kohl might indicate greater recognition for women or eastern deputies who appear to be more progressive with regard to social issues.

What seems to be more important, however, is the fact that the eastern politicians are a good deal younger than their western counterparts. To what extent that has political consequences cannot be answered conclusively here. Young age coupled with no seniority appears to be a recipe for reduced influence in the Bundestag at least in the short run, especially since the deputies from the East are far outnumbered by those from the West. However, while the overall numbers suggest that the new Bundestag is not more nor any less educated than its predecessors, the differences between the eastern and the western deputies show that a greater proportion of Easterners has gone to college. The eastern part of Germany is thus represented in the new Bundestag by individuals with extraordinarily high levels of formal education. While they may be younger than representatives from the West, they are also individuals who may find it relatively easy to adapt to the new (political) environment.

These long-term trends considered in this section give a first quick look at the composition of the Bundestag during the forty-some years of the Federal Republic's existence. It is found that in the aggregate, (6) the new Bundestag is not radically different from the older ones, yet, that there are also some subtle distinctions which are interesting and noteworthy from a political and sociological perspective. Whether the relative similarity of East and West German Bundestag members is the result of planned recruitment on the part of the western political parties or whether and to what extent they are the result of local idiosyncracies or self-selection is difficult or impossible to assess with the data at hand. It is also difficult to speculate about the political implications of demographic trends without considering the institutional arrangements and structures that constrain the patterns of recruitment to the Bundestag. Thus, the next section will examine the composition of the Bundestag with regard to the strategic positions of the different political parties.

## Using the System: The Politics of Composition

It is well known, or at least widely believed, that the laws that govern electoral systems have politically non-neutral consequences. The most famous consequences are those which affect the number of parties in a system (Duverger 1954; Rae 1967; Riker 1976; Lijphart 1990). Electoral structures and rules, however, also provide institutional constraints and opportunities for the recruitment of elites (Lijphart 1991). The remainder of this paper seeks to disentangle some of the consequences of electoral laws for the political and demographic profile of legislators arising from the laws that govern election to the German Bundestag, and it identifies some of the more »strategic« opportunities that influence the Bundestag's composition — opportunities that are distinctively structured for different political parties.

The German electoral system provides two paths to the national parliament as it combines single-member, simple majority districts, and proportional representation in one electoral system. (7) Half of the deputies are nominated and elected directly in districts (Wahlkreise) by simple majority vote. (8) The other half of the Bundestag members are nominated by the political parties at the Land (state) level and elected via party lists. Voters have two votes on election day: A first vote (Erststimme) for the district candidate, and a second vote (Zweitstimme) for the political party. Voters can split these votes whichever way they prefer. The total number of parliamentary seats a party is entitled to is determined by the overall percentage the party receives nationwide on the second vote, i.e. through the PR element of the electoral system. The winners of the district races are automatically members of the Bundestag, whereas the remaining seats the party is entitled to are filled with the candidates from the rank-ordered party lists. Once in the Bundestag, the deputies (Abgeordnete) have equal status as representatives irrespective of the mechanism by which they were elected. (9)

Political parties use the party lists to secure the election of preferred candidates by placing them high on the rank-ordered lists. It is crucial to note that these candidates typically include parliamentary leaders and candidates that would only have a marginal chance of winning a district seat (Kaack 1969). Most of the district candidates are also safely placed on the party lists so that their election to the Bundestag is secured even if they lose their district races. It is widely assumed that political parties try to balance the composition of their parliamentary groups in the Bundestag by including candidates with particular characteristics, such as religious denomination, interest group membership, regional affiliation (Löwenberg 1967; Löwenberg and Patterson 1979; Nohlen 1978), or, more recently, expertise in new technologies (Kaack 1988).

The candidates for the district races are nominated at the local, i.e. district, level, whereas the candidates on the party lists are nominated at state level party conventions. Hence, there is no centralized formal strategic planning by

national party elites. Nevertheless, it would be fallacious to presume that the absence of formal authority over the nominating process implies an absence of informal influence or coordination by the national party organizations. Thus, the candidate selection process is not the result of purely arbitrary candidate nominations in the individual districts or at the level of the individual state party organizations; more likely, it is the product of informal coordination between different levels of party hierarchies.

### The Strategic Position

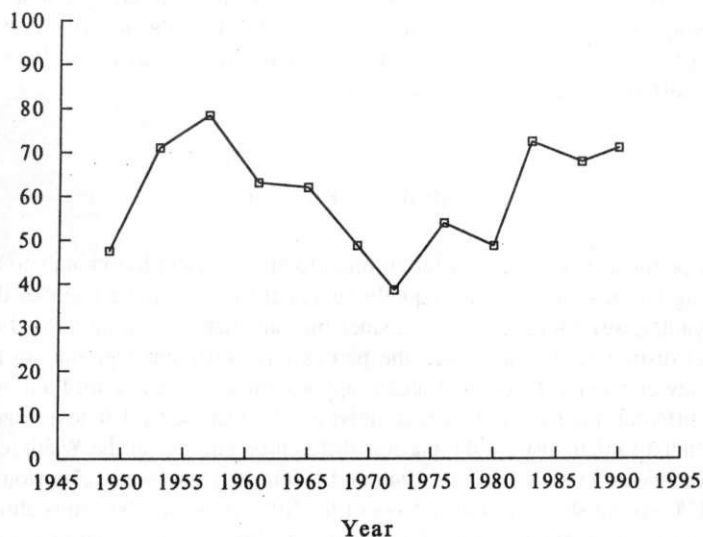
German political parties have different opportunities to elect individuals to the Bundestag because they are not equally successful in the single-member districts (Wahlkreise). More specifically, since the candidates are nominated at the state and district levels, and since the parties have different regional strongholds, they encounter different strategic opportunities depending on their success in different districts, regions and individual Länder (federal states). Figure 5 is intended to demonstrate the parties' differential success in the Wahlkreise in the country as a whole between 1949 and 1990. Only the Wahlkreise won by the CDU/CSU are shown as the success of the SPD in the Wahlkreise is almost exactly the reverse, given that these parties have usually won district mandates. Figure 6 shows the proportion of safe seats won by the CDU/CSU and the SPD, where a safe seat is defined as a seat where the member receives 55% or more of the vote. Percentages, instead of the actual number of seats, are given since the total number of Bundestag deputies has changed over time. Between 1949 and 1953 there were 242 directly elected members. With the accession of the Saarland, the number was increased in 1957 to 247. From 1965 to 1987, the number was constantly at 248 directly elected members, and in 1990 the number was increased to 328. In 1990 the PDS/LL and the FDP each won one district in the East and in 1949 there were a number of small parties that also won a small number of direct seats. These are not included here.

Thus parties are able to place on the lists those candidates who either could not expect to win a Wahlkreis, had a chance of losing a district race, or did not run in a Wahlkreis. The Free Democratic Party (FDP) and the Greens, for instance, did not expect to win any district races and therefore could only utilize the party lists for the selection of all candidates. In many cases they did field candidates for the districts, but this can largely be considered a symbolic act.

In general, the CDU/CSU usually wins more districts than the SPD (except for the SPD's heydays in 1969 and 1972) and it has a larger number of safe seats. Moreover, the distribution of Wahlkreis and Party List members within the CDU/CSU and the SPD parliamentary groups is not evenly balanced. The disparity between the number of members elected via the Wahlkreise versus

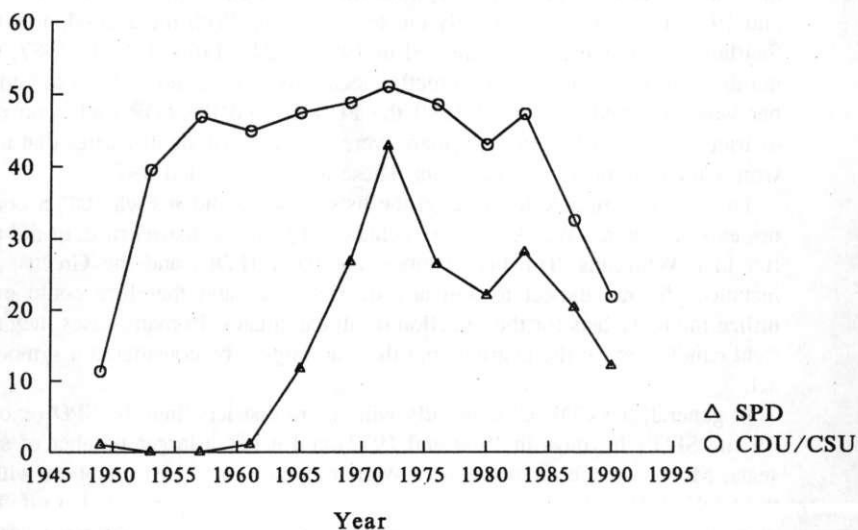
**Figure 5.**  
**Percentage of Wahlkreise Won by the CDU/CSU, 1949-1990**

% of Wahlkreise Won by the CDU/CSU, 1949-1990



**Figure 6.**  
**Percentage of Safe Seats for the CDU/CSU and the SPD, 1949-1990**

% of Safe Seats for CDU/CSU and SPD, 1949-1990



those elected via the party list is greater for the CDU/CSU than for the SPD. The majority of the CDU/CSU members are elected via the Wahlkreise, whereas the distribution of Wahlkreis vis-a-vis party list delegates is quite balanced for the SPD. This disparity stems largely from the fact that the CDU/CSU usually wins almost all the Wahlkreis races in such big states as Baden-Württemberg, Bavaria, and Schleswig-Holstein and is generally more successful in the Wahlkreise in other states as well. The SPD, on the other hand, has such regional district-level strongholds only in the smallest Länder (Saarland, Hamburg and Bremen) and wins about half of the districts in Lower-Saxony and North-Rhine Westphalia. That means that in 1987, for example, the CDU/CSU sent only five party-list delegates, but eighty-nine Wahlkreis delegates to the Bundestag from Schleswig-Holstein, Baden-Württemberg and Bavaria, while the ratio for the SPD from those Länder was forty party list candidates versus only four Wahlkreis nominees. Hence, the overall disparity between the SPD and CDU/CSU with regard to the number of members elected via the Wahlkreise versus those via the party list is due to these different regional strongholds (»Hochburgen«). What does this disparity mean? The CDU/CSU has less opportunity for party list maneuvers than the SPD, especially in the big southern Länder. Therefore, the SPD is in a better position to use the party list selection process strategically, and somewhat more independently of regional strength, while the CDU/CSU has more opportunities to determine who gets elected from districts.

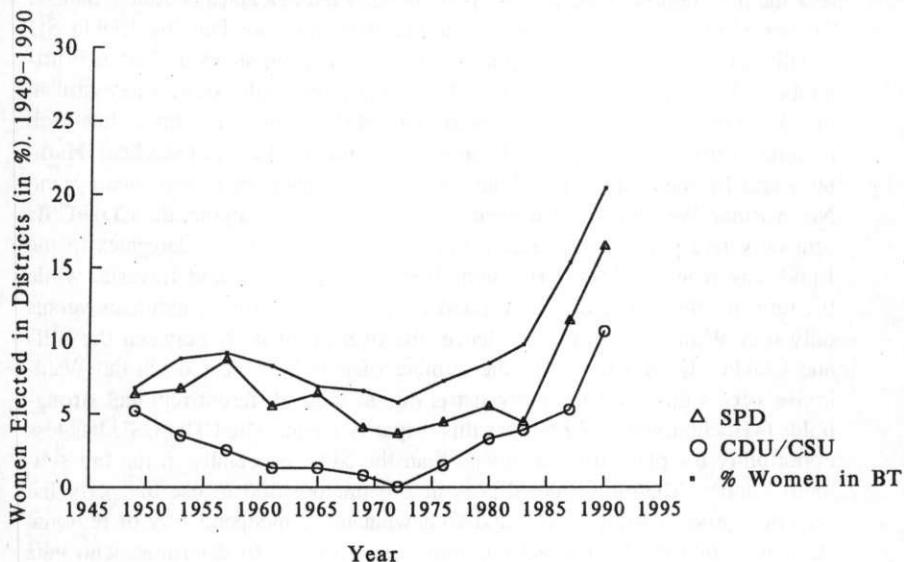
### Examples of Strategic Placement

Earlier work by political scientists has demonstrated that PR systems, in contrast to first-past-the-post systems, favor the representation of minorities in general (cf. Lijphart 1991) and women in particular (Rule 1987). Naturally, strategic behavior by party elites is difficult to observe for social scientists and systematic empirical evidence for such behavior is notoriously hard to come by. (10) Thus, we usually have to rely on ex-post-facto indicators in the form of published sources, here in the form of various handbooks.

In spite of the trend toward more female representation in the Bundestag (cf. Figure 4), Wahlkreise have tended to be reserved for the more traditional party candidates, i.e. men. It has been argued that this is due to the nature of the local candidate selection process for district candidates, and because of the greater visibility of the traditional district candidate which increases the voter's identification with the party (Kitzinger 1957; Müller 1983).

Figure 7 shows the parties' total number of women in the Bundestag as well as the proportion of CDU/CSU and SPD members elected in the districts who are women. The SPD and the CDU/CSU clearly have a smaller proportion of women elected in the Wahlkreise than via lists. It is also clear that the SPD has

**Figure 7.**  
**Percentage of Women Elected in Districts, 1949-1990**



a higher proportion of women in its parliamentary group irrespective of their route to the Bundestag. However, the overall number of successful female Wahlkreis candidates has increased substantially as well since the founding of the Federal Republic.

As the stimulus to elect more women to the Bundestag has been a fairly recent one because of new demands articulated in a changing political environment, female delegates are still a clear minority in both parties. The fact that mass-based, catch-all parties tend to underscore the heterogeneity of their outlook and composition is not such a new and recent phenomenon and it has long been taken for granted that parties use the electoral system to achieve desired ends. Whether other candidates with unusual or atypical characteristics are elected to the Bundestag via the party lists can be assessed by examining the distribution of education and union members among the parties' parliamentary groups.

The following analysis is based on a data set of the 11th Bundestag, elected in 1987, also compiled by the author. These data exclude deputies from Berlin as they had a special status in the Bundestag prior to 1990 and since they were not elected by the same mechanisms as the other members. I will rely on analyzing the composition of the CDU/CSU and SPD members as these are the two only parties that won direct mandates in the district and thus provide a control group with whom the party list delegates can be compared. Of course, the data set constitutes only a cross-sectional glimpse of candidate placement.

To what extent the findings presented here are generalizable will have to be established by further research.

Does the composition of the parties' parliamentary groups reflect these differences or is the internal composition of the parties' parliamentary groups balanced with regard to union membership and socio-economic status? The daily business of a highly developed legislature may require expertise that is more easily and predictably recruited by use of the party lists. Moreover, in the case of the CDU/CSU, placing more union members in the Bundestag may be a way to satisfy the demands of intra-party constituencies without running the risk of losing voter identification with the district candidates.

In order to answer this question, education is first employed for the subsequent analysis as an indicator of social status. The analysis shows that there is little variation with regard to education between the CDU/CSU party list and Wahlkreis deputies. The only significant difference between the two is the greater number of PhD's elected via the Wahlkreise (38.5% - 29.1%).

The composition of the SPD members, however, offers a striking distinction. SPD Wahlkreis deputies are much more likely than party list delegates to have only a secondary school education (43.0% vs. 28.3%), whereas the party list delegates are much more likely to hold a doctorate than those elected in the districts (26.4% vs. 12.7%). Thus, our findings for the SPD are consistent with the idea that party lists are used for the recruitment of legislators with desired characteristics. (11)

It is possible that an analysis of occupational status and education does not take into account the corporatized nature of the German political culture with its highly developed mechanisms of interest group alliances with political parties. Political parties and certain interest groups are often closely linked (Schmitter and Lehmbuch 1979). The result is the election of parliamentarians who represent specific interests as well as the political parties (e.g. representatives of unions or the farmer's association). In order to find indicators for such interest representation and the placement of individuals with characteristics atypical for the party, the composition of the CDU/CSU parliamentary group was analyzed with regard to union membership.

In the case of union membership this is sensible for the CDU/CSU only, since the SPD is (unofficially) allied with labor, expressed by the fact that a vast majority of SPD Bundestag deputies belongs to unions. The CDU/CSU may seek to balance its parliamentary composition by placing union members on party lists, possibly as a response to demands made by the CDA, an organization of employees within the CDU/CSU. Table 2 shows that this is indeed the case. In contrast to the 2.4% of the CDU Wahlkreis deputies who are in a union, 18.2% of the party's list delegates are union members. This disparity is significant considering the CDU/CSU's traditional constituency. Naturally, union members constitute a minority of the CDU/CSU; however, the emphasis should not be on the number of union-member deputies, but on the fact that most of them reach the Bundestag through party lists.



**Table 1.**  
**Distribution of Education among the Deputies Elected Via**  
**Wahlkreise and Party Lists to the 11th Bundestag in 1987 for**  
**CDU/CSU and SPD (in %)<sup>a</sup>**

	CDU/CSU		SPD	
	WK	PL	WK	PL
<b>Second. Level</b>	18.3	21.8	43.0	28.3
<b>College</b>	43.2	49.1	44.3	45.3
<b>Doctorate</b>	38.5	29.1	12.7	26.4
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
	N = 224		N = 185	

<sup>a</sup> excluding delegates from Berlin

**WK:** Elected via Wahlkreise (single-member districts)

**PL:** Elected via Party Lists

**Table 2.**  
**Distribution of Union Members among CDU/CSU Wahlkreis and**  
**Party List Deputies Elected to the 11th Bundestag in 1987**  
**(in %)<sup>a</sup>**

	Wahlkreis	Party List
<b>Union</b>	2.4	18.2
<b>Non-Union</b>	97.6	81.8
	100.0	100.0
	N = 169	N = 55

<sup>a</sup> excluding delegates from Berlin

Which route do new members take to the Bundestag? We can split the Bundestag deputies according to whether they are junior or senior members of the chamber. For our purposes, junior members are defined as freshmen or second term members, while senior members have a seniority of three or more terms. If we exclude members from the regional strongholds (Hochburgen) where the opportunity to bring new members into the Bundestag consists almost exclusively of election in the districts, (12) we find that there is a distinct difference between the SPD and the CDU/CSU: In 1987, the election under consideration here, the SPD brought in new members predominantly by way of the Wahlkreise, while there was little difference in the case of the CDU/CSU. To put it another way: Senior members of the SPD were elected mainly from party lists while the experienced CDU/CSU delegates were equally likely to come from party lists or have their own districts. Since the CDU/CSU usually wins almost two thirds of the district races even in the non-strongholds, the number of junior members elected from party lists is high.

**Table 3.**  
**Deputies Elected to the 11th Bundestag in 1987**  
**From Non-Hochburgen Via Wahlkreise and Party Lists**  
**for the CDU/CSU and the SPD\***

	CDU/CSU		SPD	
	WK	PL	WK	PL
<b>Junior</b>	32.5 (26)	34.7 (17)	47.1 (32)	20.2 (21)
<b>Senior</b>	67.5 (54)	65.3 (32)	52.9 (36)	79.8 (83)
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
	N = 129		N = 172	

\* excluding delegates from Berlin

Junior: First or second term members

Senior: Members with seniority of three and more terms

Thus it appears that the SPD recruits more individuals with university degrees for the Bundestag by way of the party lists. This may be explained by a need for expertise for committee work or the greater likelihood of academics to gain political experience solely as party functionaries. While the use of the party lists is limited in the case of the CDU/CSU because of its success in the Wahlkreise, the select examples of union members and education show that the PR element of the electoral system is conducive to the representation of mi-

norities in the parties' parliamentary groups. However, interestingly enough, new SPD members got elected in Wahlkreise — at least in 1987 — and not via party lists. Different ideologies and different needs are factors influencing the composition of the legislature; yet, they are not the sole reasons for the different compositions of the parties' parliamentary groups. To what extent political parties have opportunities to use the electoral system and thus structure the composition of the legislature depends considerably on the strategic positions the political parties are, i.e. on the structural constraints imposed on their opportunities for maneuvers.

## Conclusions

The social and political profile of one important segment of (West) Germany's political elite, the members of the German Bundestag, has changed considerably during the course of the post-war period. There has been a steady trend toward the academization and institutionalization of the Bundestag. Moreover, once existing differences between political parties — such as differences of socio-economic status — have narrowed considerably in the past forty-some years. In many ways, while the Federal Republic became institutionalized as a political system, the composition of the Bundestag became more homogeneous over time. However, there have also been distinct breaks in these trends, in particular most recently after the unification of the two German states. In the aggregate, representatives from the East are younger and have higher levels of formal education than those from the West. Yet, within the parties' parliamentary groups, we also find considerable homogeneity among eastern and western deputies.

What is particularly interesting about the German case, is the way in which the electoral system helps structure the socio-demographic and political composition of the Bundestag. These institutional rules, consisting of a mixture of proportional representation and first-past-the-post, provide the political parties with different strategic opportunities. Naturally, the conclusion that political parties have opportunities to use an electoral system strategically is not new. What is interesting about the German case is that the two elements of the electoral system (PR and single member, simple majority district rule) condition one another, but to a different extent for different political parties.

Both parties elect a greater number of women to the legislature by way of the PR element. In particular, the SPD elects more highly educated members to the Bundestag through the party lists, while the CDU/CSU increases the number of union members by the same mechanism. However, the success of PR is mediated by the parties' different regional strengths since the proportion of Wahlkreis members to party list delegates within the parliamentary group of the party differs for the CDU/CSU and the SPD. The parties' electoral histories

show that the CDU/CSU traditionally has an edge in the districts, and thus a larger proportion of its parliamentary group elected to the parliament via that route. The SPD's senior members are elected mainly via party lists, while the CDU/CSU's senior deputies are equally likely come from districts and party lists. This also means that the SPD tends to get new members elected to the Bundestag via districts, while there is little difference in the case of the CDU/CSU.

The case of women is particularly crucial. Those who believe that more women should be represented in the democratic process find that women (or other minorities) appear to have had a more difficult time overcoming the hurdle of being nominated in, and win, Wahlkreise; the local nomination process tends to favor men (or more traditional party candidates in general). Moreover, in the case of the SPD, the seniority distribution in the SPD Bundestagsfraktion (parliamentary group) has traditionally favored more senior members, i.e. men, with regard to the placement on the party lists so that women may have difficulty obtaining safe party list nominations.

What does all this mean for the parties' strategies? What are the mechanisms parties can use to alleviate these differences and difficulties? The SPD is the only party which now employs a strategy »from above« as it requires all party offices to be filled with equal proportions of men and women. By requiring more women to get involved in the party's affairs it is expected that more will eventually run for elective office. This directive has led to the criticism that the new female SPD politicians are »quota women« (Quotenfrauen) who lack the necessary qualifications. It is questionable whether the strategy from above is the only useful strategy a party can employ since it necessitates a broad acceptance of such mechanisms — especially at the grass roots level. Aside from ideological reasons, such a mechanism may be difficult to implement in a less hierarchically organized and more heterogenous party such as the CDU/CSU in light of the sheer lack of womencandidates for party or elective office.

The German Bundestag after 1949 provides unique opportunities to study the profile of one particular segment of political elites — legislators. There is a wealth of information waiting to be discovered, described, and analyzed. However, there is also more to understanding the social and political composition of legislatures than the simple description of legislators' characteristics. Institutions and formal rules play an important mediating role in the recruitment of political elites in any system, Germany being no exception. Its electoral system is just one, albeit a prime, example for such effects.

### Notes:

- (1) See Hoffmann-Lange (1991) for an overview.
- (2) 32.2% of the former East German parliament (Volkskammer) deputies had been female (Journal für Sozialforschung, 1, 1991, p.91).
- (3) These scholars do not suggest, however, that the transfer of the West German party system should extend to recruitment and organizational patterns.
- (4) Interested readers are welcome to peruse the data set upon request.
- (5) There is only one member elected in the West who is not a member of the CDU/CSU, SPD or FDP: Ulla Jelpke (PDS/LL) who was elected via the party list from North-Rhine Westphalia.
- (6) This is of course partially a function of the smaller number of east German representatives.
- (7) **The German system, once unique, is now being imitated in Eastern Europe.** The first free elections to the Hungarian and Bulgarian parliaments in 1990 operated under electoral systems not exactly identical, but very similar, to the German system.
- (8) **The unification of East and West Germany brought an extension of the** West German electoral system to East Germany. Consequently, there are now 662 members in the Bundestag, 4 members of which are the result of so-called Überhangmandate (surplus mandates).
- (9) For a quick overview of the electoral system, see: Max Kaase. 1984. »Personalized Proportional Representation: The 'Model' of the West German Electoral System.« In: Arend Lijphart and Bernard Grofman: Choosing an Electoral System: Issues and Alternatives. New York: Praeger, 155-164.
- (10) For an exception, see: Herbert Kitschelt. 1989. The Logics of Party Formation. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- (11) An analysis of the distribution of occupational status with regard to party list and Wahlkreis candidates yields results similar to those associated with education. Individuals were classified according to whether they had an occupation of low, medium, or higher status prior to election to the Bundestag. SPD members with jobs of higher occupational status are more likely to be elected to the Bundestag via party lists while the CDU/CSU members show little variation with regard to occupational status.
- (12) For the CDU/CSU we thus exclude data from Bavaria, Baden-Württemberg, and Schleswig-Holstein, while for the SPD we exclude those members who were elected in Bremen, Hamburg, and the Saarland.

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